

Extraordinary Council

26 January 2015

Member Questions (15)

1.	Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>At the Traffic Regulation Committee on 15 Jan, you stated that the Cheltenham Transport Plan project was broadly supported by two thirds of Cheltenham. I understand that this opinion was gained from the consultation in 2013? How do you reconcile your statement of wide support with the results from the latest consultations in 2014, conducted by GCC, proving that "...levels of individual objection generally out-weigh support, and therefore there is no clear mandate for a scheme to be introduced", as quoted on page 6 of the Executive Summary of the TRO Committee Report?</p>
	Response from Leader
	<p>My comment was based upon a historical perspective with similar results across 3 consultations carried out between 2007 and 2013. Those consultations elicited much higher response numbers than those for the TRO consultations. For instance. 1496 people responded to the 2013 consultation compared to 167 for the 2nd TRO consultation in 2014. This generally reflects the fact that the 2013 consultation was designed to establish general opinions about the proposals, while the TRO process is intended to generate specific concerns and objections.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Nelson asked the Leader whether he was saying the Executive Summary was wrong?</p> <p>The Leader advised that he was not responsible for the information in the report to the TRO Committee and in his response he was referring to the consultation that had taken place in Cheltenham over the years. In terms of the scale of responses clearly there was far more responses in 2013 than to the 2nd TRO consultation and that was the point he was making.</p>
2.	Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>At the Traffic Regulation Committee on 15 Jan, you stated that the JCS house increases had been factored into the traffic modelling. Yet the TRO Committee Report at page 28, para 17.11 clearly states that only new developments with existing planning permission have been included. Although it also states that some generic growth factor assumptions have actually been included for the period up to 2026, that is not quite the same thing as taking on board all the specific and large housing proposals in the JCS, which actually goes up to 2031. Can you please explain the apparent contradiction in your statement to the TRO Committee?</p>

	Response from Leader
	<p>What I actually said at the TRO committee was that the TRO traffic modelling had assumed the town centre developments currently underway; that the JCS traffic modelling had assumed the implementation of the Cheltenham Transport Plan; and that traffic issues in areas such as Princess Elizabeth Way, resulting from any North-West Cheltenham urban extension, are considered in the JCS traffic modelling.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Nelson said that he was not convinced that everything up to 2031 was included in the modelling work. Even if it was, the JCS used the Saturn model which was originally used for the Boots Corner modelling but was then rejected because it was inappropriate and lacked detail. An alternative model was then used which only uses peak day time traffic and so what about the surge traffic that takes place during the course of the year on a regular basis. Has this been taken into account in the traffic modelling?</p> <p>The Leader was not an expert on traffic modelling and it was not the council's responsibility so was not able to answer the question but invited the officer Scott Tompkins to comment.</p> <p>The officer advised that his understanding was that the model used took into account all the housing, employment and retail developments with existing planning permissions as well as those committed or allocated developments in the Cheltenham Local Plan 3. It didn't account for everything in the JCS because this has been further developed since the point the modelling was done but his understanding was that it accounts for almost all of that anticipated growth.</p>
3.	Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>I am pleased that officers have finally taken on board the requirement to develop a Strategic Risk Assessment for the Cheltenham Transport Plan, although this should have been drafted well before the Council's decision on the Boots Corner Plan, in Nov 2013. I am sure this Risk Register will be fully debated in Council on 26 Jan. However, to assist that debate, I would be grateful to receive more information on the Risk register 'potential mitigation budget spend' column. In particular, what are the funding implications of Risk CTP10 (total, not just the mitigation £40K assumed); and Risks CTP 16, 17 and 18, which appear to be hiding some of the potential costs of this project within other budgets, which may not have formally planned for these risks. I am sure Council would appreciate having sight of the total potential mitigation costs of the Cheltenham Transport Plan, so that any decision to progress this Plan is informed by a full awareness of the financial implications.</p>
	Response from Cabinet member

	<p>GCC currently estimates the cost of implementing the Cheltenham Transport Plan TROs at approximately £600k, but has not yet provided a scheme by scheme breakdown of costs to this authority.</p> <p>At this stage, there are no detailed scheme costs relating to mitigation measures and these are impossible to assess and prioritise in detail at this stage beyond the estimates set out and in advance of the reality of scheme implementation. However, the Highways Authority is confident that the total budget identified for mitigation measures is likely to be sufficient to manage identified risks down to an acceptable level.</p> <p>Whilst the Council has made available an additional £50,000 to assist with additional mitigation costs should these prove necessary, it is GCC as Highways Authority that has the primary responsibility for the safety and integrity of the road network (as confirmed by the GCC letter of 22nd Jan 2015 to the Leader).</p> <p>Other costs are identified that are either actual or agreed responsibilities of CBC e.g. off-street car parks directional signage and public realm improvements beyond the GCC standard.</p> <p>It is worth bearing in mind that there are existing issues relating to the capacity and operation of the highway network, so we are certainly not starting from a perfect situation.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Nelson commented that all the TROs were being implemented relatively cheaply at a cost of only £600K and if that was so why could all the TROs not be made experimental?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member advised that the £600K related to the cost directly relating to the implementation of TROs themselves but there was a further budget of £2M for the civic works around the Boots Corner square.</p> <p>The officer added the reason that the TRO committee did not recommend that the whole scheme be experimental was that the changes to the inner ring road required physical changes to be made which will cost up to £600K and they would not look to reverse those as the cost of reversal would be in the same order. This recommendation had gone through the statutory consultation process and he did not think that the TRO committee's recommendation could be reversed.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p>
	<p>I understand that on an internal CBC 'wish list' of budget enhancements, there is mention of a £300k Vehicle Management System that could be used to help traffic find available car park spaces and perhaps also offer help choosing the least congested routes through Town. In the Strategic</p>

	<p>Risk Assessment at CTP 9, it is suggested that CBC has identified funding for this enhancement, yet I assume it is not yet in the budget for next year? Is that correct? If it is yet to be budgeted for, does he not have sympathy for the argument that such a system is an essential component of the Boots Corner plan and if not, why not?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Had such an item been in the budget for next year, no doubt I would have been accused of presumption given that the TRO committee had not yet sat to consider their decision. It has been an aspiration for several years, but not a commitment given the key factors that would impinge upon it, including not only the Cheltenham Transport Plan, but also major developments such as North Place. It would be profligate to install such a system knowing that major strategic changes were being considered.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Councillor Nelson asked if the Cabinet Member considered £300K was sufficient funding for the system and if the aim of the Boots Corner Plan was to improve access to car parks why do we not have a car parking strategy?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member believed that it would be sufficient but he could not say definitely until they had tested the market. The car parking strategy is complex as the council owns a lot of car parks in the centre of town and the strategy is work in progress. Many car parks such as Town Centre East and Regent Arcade are still going to remain as car parks so the fact that the car parking strategy is still a year away from being finalised is not a show stopper for the scheme being considered today.</p>
5.	<p>Question from Councillor Chris Nelson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> <p>What would be the financial implications of making all the Cheltenham Traffic Plan TROs experimental, rather than just the Boots Corner component? Please show the costs of each TRO separately?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>This question is more appropriately directed to the Highways Authority, but in many senses is academic, as the TRO committee has delivered its recommendation.</p> <p>GCC currently estimates the cost of implementing the Cheltenham Transport Plan TROs at approximately £600k, but has not yet provided a scheme by scheme breakdown of costs to this authority.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Nelson asked if there was any point in the Council debating the issue today and would the county council listen to what Members had to say?</p> <p>In response the Cabinet Member replied yes and no. The TRO committee</p>

	<p>had made their recommendation so that was not going to change but there was still a chance for Cheltenham to say whether they supported the scheme or rejected it. If Council tonight rejected the scheme presumably the county council would not progress the scheme. However it was a yes or no to the scheme and there was no opportunity to amend it.</p> <p>The officer confirmed that the commissioning director specifically asked for the issue to come back to this Council to reaffirm their commitment or otherwise to the scheme and that would be taken into account when the county Cabinet made their final decision. If Council decided to amend the scheme the likely outcome would be that the county council would drop the scheme as they would have to re-advertise and re-consult.</p>
6.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	With regard to the "mixed space" what safeguards will be in place to prevent pedestrians and cyclists colliding?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	A point made by the police at the TRO committee was that there are a significant number of cyclists already in a non-cycling zone on the High Street. No safeguards exist today other than police presence to enforce, but as the police advised, incidents are extremely rare. Impacts are invariably low, because risks are much lower with non-motorised transport. The formalising of an existing situation does not suggest that additional measures, such as segregation of cyclists and pedestrians, are warranted.
7.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	How are pedestrians going to safely walk from the High St to the lower High Street when buses and taxis are crossing it?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Initially the pelican crossing will remain. It is however, worth noting that pedestrians comfortably walk across a bus lane when traversing across the High Street, say from the Nationwide Building Society to Patisserie Valerie, without the aid of a formalised crossing. The fundamental difference is the reduction in the volume of traffic and critically, the average speed of it.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Mason asked why the proposal to run buses through this route was not included in the trial.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member referred the question to the officer. He responded that ideally they would like to trial it but this would require physical changes which would require a lot more investment. A number of people had raised concerns that the Boots Corner scheme would cause an increase in traffic in other areas of the town and the purpose of the trail was to assess this.</p>

8.	Question from Councillor Diggory Seacome to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Can we please know how any impact on residents affected by the change in traffic flows has been calculated, and what consultation took place to achieve these findings.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>GCC has provided the outputs of their detailed modelling in its consultations across the town, on its website and in various meetings over the last 2 years.</p> <p>Outputs were shown as traffic flows in 2010, traffic flows projected to 2026 with no intervention and traffic flows projected to 2026 with the changes proposed.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Seacome asked whether the Cabinet Member felt that information on the website and in various meetings was sufficiently accessible.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member felt that given the sheer volume of information it had been made available in the best way and members and the public had had sufficient opportunities to access it.</p>
9.	Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Is the £150k fund put aside for mitigation measures from the Cheltenham Transport Plan still considered to be adequate, and if not what amount would be appropriate? What risks have been considered that could affect this figure?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>In the absence of any advice to the contrary from colleagues at GCC highways, we are confident that the identified sum is likely to be sufficient. The risks considered are listed in the risk register associated with the papers for this meeting. Please also refer to GCC letter to the Leader dated 22nd January, 2015.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Babbage said there had been a suggestion from officers at CBC and GCC that an increase in the mitigation funds would be sensible. Would the Cabinet Member support this and by how much?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member thought this was a question for the County Council but it was his understanding that they would fund whatever is required and he didn't believe they had set a limit on that. If the situation did arise he thought this council would seriously consider their position as they work in partnership with the county council.</p>
10.	Question from Councillor Adam Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay

	<p>Please provide the following, a hard copy of the relevant versions and sections of the risk register or risk assessment that were used by CBC when making the two decisions to forward this scheme to the TRO Committee in November/December 2013.</p> <p>These decisions are the 'Non Key' decision of Full Council of 18/11/2013 and the "key" decision made by the leader, 5th December.</p> <p>The published notice of intent and documentation for this a "key" decision, which should be 28 days was cut to just three, please include the documentation of how this risk was considered and recorded for the 5th December.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Lillywhite said he had not received the information he had requested so asked where were the risks from November 2013? What was the point of having a risk register when its fundamental requirement to list risks was repeatedly ignored.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member said he would ask officers to provide this information. The risk register would not have a great deal in it from the CBC point of view because the risks sit with the County Level and are high level risks. A more detailed risk register would be provided as the scheme progresses into the design stage.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The risk assessment at that time was CBC-specific and made available on the Council's website at the end of the associated reports. This has since developed into the much fuller shared risk assessment with GCC associated with the latest report to Council. This risk assessment identifies the risk owner(s) for each identified risk.</p> <p>The Leader decision on 5 December 2013 was an urgent decision, in order to inform the GCC lead Cabinet member on 9 December 2013 and, therefore, the 28 notice period did not apply.</p> <p>Council now has a further opportunity to consider the Cheltenham Transport Plan, including the shared risk assessment and to decide whether or not to support the recommendations of the TRO committee.</p>
11.	Question from Councillor Adam Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Please confirm that any roads which may lose their on-street parking and/or be made one way to facilitate the greater volume of demand from traffic, as suggested by the mitigation team, will have the works performed during the trial, so that a true assessment can be made of all impacts before the trial is completed or any conclusions are drawn.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	This is for determination by GCC as Highways Authority in the light of any

	<p>outputs from traffic monitoring, but it seems a sensible approach which I suggest, we, as ward Councillors jointly propose to GCC.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Lillywhite asked for conformation that a true trial would occur as a trail was pointless if the most controversial and dangerous element was removed.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member did not agree with this statement and the officer had already explained the process for testing this part of the plan.</p>
12.	<p>Question from Councillor Chris Ryder to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p>
	<p>Has sufficient work been carried out with the Disability Working Group, and other organisations of the town who have a voice on behalf of people with disabilities, who will use 'Boots corner Space' along with cyclists, taxis, buses and coaches, who have equal rights, on ensuring their safety when using this area of proposed significant change?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>GCC, which has the responsibility for equality proofing the scheme proposals, has undertaken consultation with various groups including the Disability Working Group. Also, as you note, CBC with the Task Force organised meetings with representatives of various disability groups to establish what works and does not work for them in the town centre now, as the scale of works being proposed create an opportunity to rectify existing failings.</p> <p>When the Council decision was made on 18/11/13, we were confident that appropriate steps were being taken to hear the views of the various groups, but equally recognised that any work could only be a broad based discussion to identify concerns as the whole process would be subject to the TRO process.</p> <p>That group continues to be consulted and meet to discuss and provide input into actual rather than theoretical design issues. Recently, advice has been sought on the High Street scheme associated with Brewery Phase II and responses will be taken into account in final design work, to be implemented this Spring.</p> <p>Physical changes to Boots Corner will not occur until the TRO committee has considered the outcomes of the trial, but in the interim we are confident that this representative group will be heard and their concerns fully taken on-board should a public realm upgrade be implemented.</p> <p>Equally, all schemes involving the highway require an independent audit to ensure compliance with safety and the proposals for the High Street, Boots' Corner and any other elements of the Cheltenham Transport Plan will be assessed in this manner.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Ryder asked for assurance that designated drop off and pick up points in and around the town centre for vehicles transporting disabled people would be identified and that this</p>

	<p>would be discussed with appropriate disability groups.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member was sure that it would be and there would be consultation with all relevant parties but he could not be more specific on locations at this stage.</p>
13	Question from Councillor Andrew Lansley to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Like other residential areas close to the town centre, the residents of St Paul's are seeking reassurance around the mitigation of the CTP and wish for there to be a further consultation process within the community to determine that appropriate measures are in place. Will the opinions of our residents be taken into account in providing effective, measurable mitigation as part of this trial period?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>GCC, as Highways Authority, will be monitoring the impact of the changes. Any mitigation measures proposed will be subject to public scrutiny, prior to implementation. My understanding is that certain measures currently proposed such as a 20mph zone have been the result of active public engagement of the community with both CBC Councillors and GCC representatives. I am hopeful that this will continue and also that this wider scheme will help to address some existing concerns, in addition to those arising from the scheme itself.</p>
14.	Question from Councillor Andrew Lansley to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>As St Paul's Road was not included in the original traffic data that was provided, can we have reassurances that it will be this time? Monitoring at key points in the area would help provide a more accurate picture of the impact of these proposed changes. Residents have suggested the Eastern entrance to St Paul's Road, around the regenerated CBH areas on Folly Lane and outside Gardner's Lane school as appropriate places – could these be included as part of the monitoring process?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>This seems a reasonable request and I suggest that CBC Councillors ask colleagues at GCC whether this is feasible.</p>
15.	Question from Councillor Andrew Lansley to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>With the recent capitulation and uncertainty over North Place, it is unclear as to the impact (and timescale) of this development on the expected traffic volume change. When combined with the parking review and other developments in the north of Cheltenham I believe there should be a clear overview of the cumulative impact of multiple projects occurring across our town. What does this council intend to do with respect to a cohesive approach to the future planning of this town when it is evident there is none?</p>

	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Your observation regarding North Place is correct and until there is clarity from the two parties involved, it would be premature to speculate upon the way forward.</p> <p>It is an unfortunate fact that not all developments progress, but despite the setback at North Place, we do have Honeybourne Gate, Brewery Phase II and Albion Street all on site presently. The recommendation by the TRO committee provides another step towards the longer term goal of delivering sustainable development, so in reality we have many of the building blocks and also a comprehensive traffic-modelling tool against which new developments can be tested. This allows GCC as Highways Authority to establish potential impacts and require developments to mitigate as necessary and appropriate.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Lansley asked if the south part of Clarence Square would be monitored.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member indicated that officers had received this request and would be taken on board.</p>